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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [ECON](#) [SMIG](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: IRAQI POPULATION IN JORDAN INCREASING

REF: A. 05 AMMAN 3963
[1](#)B. AMMAN 177
[1](#)C. TD-314/60389-06
[1](#)D. AMMAN 6761

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) Informed estimates of the number of Iraqis here now range from 500,000 to one million. Jordan's Ministry of Interior estimates that approximately thirty thousand Iraqis have moved to Jordan in the first half of 2006. By comparison, about thirty thousand Iraqis moved to Jordan in all of 2005. Jordan's population in 2002 was 5.3 million.

[1](#)2. (U) Until early 2006, the majority of Iraqis in Jordan were likely working class Shi'a. Interior Ministry contacts and Jordanian border officials believe that over past six months, the flow of migrants has taken on a more Sunni, middle class, and upper class tinge. Most embassy contacts among the Iraqi community here relate the changing volume and nature of the flow to the security situation in Iraq, especially Baghdad.

POLITICALLY QUIESCENT

[1](#)3. (U) Several politically active Sunni figures (e.g., Khalaf al-Ayan, Saleh Mutlak, Harith al Dhari, Hassib al-Obeidi, Ali Sajri) now appear to spend the majority of their time in Jordan. However, the overwhelming majority of Iraqis in Jordan are politically inactive. Supported by the Al-Gaood family, a new Iraqi political party, the "National Liberal Front," met in Amman in mid-August. The party has no mass base and is led by long-time migrs who have yet to demonstrate credible political pull inside Iraq or Jordan (ref C.) See ref D for an assessment of Jordan's efforts to block terrorist and former regime element finance.

OVERSTAYS

[1](#)4. (SBU) One of the things that makes Jordan attractive to Iraqis is the visa-free entry regime for Iraqi visitors, and the GOJ's unwillingness (or inability) to enforce immigration rules against Iraqi "visitors" who overstay. According to Hanna Murad, political counselor at the Iraqi Embassy in Amman, between 70 and 80 percent of Iraqis living in Jordan are in effect "out of status." Iraqis entering Jordan receive two-week visit permits that are renewable for up to three months through Jordan's Ministry of Interior. Those who remain in Jordan and fail to renew their permits are, in theory, subject to a fine of JD 1.5) approximately \$2.10) each day they overstay. This fee is supposed to be paid when the traveler departs Jordan. Iraqis seeking work permits, or to enroll their children in public schools, must in theory pay the fine or face deportation. However, it appears these rules are rarely enforced, and then usually in cases of Iraqis detained for other offenses. Nasser Habashneh,

Director of the Minister of Interior's private office, said approximately 30,000 Iraqi children were enrolled in Jordanian public schools. However, many other Iraqi children, he said, were working low-wage jobs instead of attending school. Murad also told poloff that Jordanian border officials were exercising their discretion to deny entry to many Iraqi males of military age. Embassy Amman's Civil Affairs Liaison Team confirms that Jordanian border control authorities closely scrutinize Iraqi males and deny many of them entry. Note: This practice is a response to the November, 2005 bombings of three Amman hotels that killed sixty. Suicide bombers from Iraq were responsible. END NOTE.

15. (SBU) Jordanian home renters and buyers associate rising real estate costs and gentrification with the growing Iraqi population, and perpetuate the myth that most of the Iraqis here are fat-cats. COMMENT: That said, Post understands from wealthy Iraqi Sunni business contacts that a large majority of their rich colleagues have left Baghdad for Amman. Consequently, there is a very strongly-felt presence of wealthy Sunni Iraqis here, even if they are in fact outnumbered by their less well-heeled countrymen. END COMMENT. The well-to-do minority of the Iraqi influx has indeed pumped millions into West Amman's real estate markets, enriching many Jordanian land-owners. Several new Iraqi restaurants have opened in Amman's Rashid neighborhood) an area increasingly referred to as "Little Baghdad." Several Iraqis were beaten immediately after the November hotel bombings, but aside from these incidents, there has been little real friction between Iraqis and Jordanians.

16. (C) Comment: Such Iraqi political action as there is here is generated chiefly by Iraqi notables who travel briefly to

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Amman to hold meetings in secure and five-star comfort. Jordan's longer-term Iraqi population remains shy of politics, due in part to the perception that Jordanian authorities are watching, and many have a tenuous legal status here. The Iraqis' economic impact remains a net positive for Jordan. As a security issue) both for Jordan and Iraq) the Iraqi diaspora here bears watching, but until now has remained quiet.

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